

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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NEW FEDERAL REGULATION ENCOURAGES CAPTIVE BREEDING OF ENDANGERED SPECIES

A marked increase in captive breeding of endangered species is the anticipated result of a new regulation issued by the Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The rule eases Federal regulation of interstate transfer of certain captive species covered by the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The action was prompted by evidence that stringent regulatory procedures have led to decreased breeding by zoological parks, bird breeders, and others. Breeders have pointed out that tough Federal restrictions--while intended to protect and propagate such species--have sometimes had the opposite effect. In some cases, persons who would otherwise breed endangered species have ceased to do so or have limited the number of offspring produced because they could not be readily transferred to other facilities.

Under the new regulation, a zoo, wildlife park, aquarium, and other organizations or individuals can register with the Fish and Wildlife Service to become a licensed shipper and receiver of captive-born endangered species. After registration, reports will be required annually.

Wildlife affected by the regulation includes non-native U.S. endangered species and native U.S. endangered species that are sufficiently protected from unauthorized taking or are in low demand. The rule provides that native species will be designated on a case-by-case basis. One species, the Laysan teal, was designated in the rulemaking.

Formerly, breeders were required to obtain a Federal permit before engaging in interstate commerce or exporting of captive-bred wildlife. This time-consuming process led to higher maintenance costs of animals awaiting shipment, increased difficulties in handling adult animals instead of young ones, and unavailability of breeding stock when needed.

The Fish and Wildlife Service determined that activities involving captive wildlife should be regulated as required by the Endangered Species Act, but only to the extent necessary to conserve the species. According to Service biologists, the new regulation should help reduce inbreeding--which has been cited as a factor in juvenile mortality--by facilitating exchange of animals. It is also hoped that the rule will reduce the demand for wildlife that might otherwise be taken from its natural habitat.

The Service proposed the regulatory change on May 23, 1979, and received some 1500 comments--nearly all favorable--from zoos, bird and mammal breeders, biomedical, zoological, circus, and conservation organizations, and Federal and State governments.

The regulation was published in the September 17, 1979, Federal Register.

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